**Charter of the Executive Committee of the Regional Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change**
**(USDA ARS-NRCS-Forest Service-NIFA-FSA-RMA-RD-CCPO)**

***Background:*** During June 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the launch of seven "Regional Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change." The seven regional and three subsidiary hubs will deliver science-based, practical information to farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and resource managers to support decision-making related to mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change. The hubs are intended to help maintain and strengthen agricultural production, natural resource management, and rural economic development under increasing climate variability by providing guidance on technologies and risk management practices at regional and local scales.

In some regions, special aspects of biogeography, production systems, sector needs or demographics suggested the need for focused work at a sub-regional scale. In these cases, Subsidiary Hubs have been established to meet these specific needs.

Key partners in the nationwide network of Regional Hubs include the public and land grant universities, USDA scientists, the private sector, state, local and regional governments, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) regional climate change experts, and non-profits engaged in providing assistance to landowners.

***Purpose of the Executive Committee:*** The purpose of the Executive Committee (Committee) of the USDA Regional Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change is to guide, focus and facilitate resources needed within the USDA to implement the Climate Change Hubs. The Committee will provide a core set of operational practices that the Committee members will support throughout their tenure.

***Committee Roles and Responsibilities:***
**Committee Members:**
The Committee shall be made up of senior leaders identified by the agencies and offices leading the Regional and Subsidiary Hubs, and agencies and offices served by the Hubs and making substantive contributions to Hub efforts, including but not limited to:

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
Forest Service (FS)
Farm Service Agency (FSA)
Risk Management Agency (RMA)
Rural Development (RD)
Climate Change Program Office (CCPO)

A **National Leader**, selected from one of the three agencies providing leadership for (ARS, FS, NRCS) leading a Regional Hub, will Chair the Executive Committee for a two fiscal year term.

The Vice-Chair will be the CCPO representative. (More information on the National Leader and Vice-Chair is below.)

**Committee Roles and Responsibilities:**

- Identify existing resources to support the activities of the Hubs and coordinate the preparation of additional budget requests if necessary.
- Provide leadership and direction for the Hubs, information/data management, and communication efforts.
- Set national and regional priorities for the Hubs.
    - Develop guidance on building regional networks in support of each Hub.
    - Engage land grants, extension, states, private sector, etc.
- Develop and complete a strategic plan for the Hubs and develop the implementation plan to achieve the strategic plan goals.
- Develop a stakeholder advisory process to help inform the priority setting and strategic planning efforts for the Hubs.
- Identify and facilitate nationwide actions needed to support the Hubs such as:
    - Improving access to regional forecasts and projections;
    - Developing communication networks and sharing outreach and education materials; and
    - Establishing agreements with other agencies and Departments to facilitate the activities of the Hubs.
- Direct the performance review process of the Hubs every 5 years.
- Serve as USDA climate change program advocates and identify resources within their agencies/office to help achieve the Hubs' goals.
- Develop and agree on a set of Executive Committee Operating Guidelines.
- Designate a National Leader that will rotate on a bi-annual, fiscal year basis.

**National Leader**

A representative of one of the agencies providing leadership for Regional Hubs (ARS, Forest Service, or NRCS) will serve as the National Leader for the Regional and Subsidiary Hubs and Chair of the Executive Committee. The National Leader will serve a two fiscal year term. The position of National Leader will rotate among Regional Hub-leading agencies. Agency rotation will be determined by the Executive Committee. The National Leader will be supported by an Executive Secretariat (a non-rotating, full-time position that will be housed in CCPO and provide technical support to the Hub Program and the National Leader). The National Leader will be funded by their home agency and will be a GS-15 or higher, possessing skills needed to direct and coordinate the Hubs' activities and work with partner agencies and departments. It is expected that the National Leader will be a full-time position for the first two years but may evolve to require less time as the Hubs become established and fully functional.

**Roles & Responsibilities:**

- Lead the Executive Committee's efforts to develop a strategic plan and an implementation plan.
- Capitalize on synergies and efficiencies across Regional and Subsidiary Hubs to ensure that the Hubs function as a network. Review and approve Executive Committee documents before they are released to internal and external audiences.

- Convene and document Executive Committee meetings, communications, and other activities.
- Maintain Executive Committee documents and correspondence.
- Serve as an *ex officio* member of the Regional Directors Committee.
- Chair the 5-year review of the Regional Hubs.
- Serve on the USDA Global Change Task Force and provide quarterly updates.
- Provide a yearly report documenting the activities and deliverables of the Hub network.

**Vice-Chair**

The Vice-Chair will work closely with the National Leader and OSEC to ensure alignment of the Hubs' activities with USDA goals and priorities. The Vice-Chair will Chair the Executive Committee when the National Leader is not available.

**Executive Secretariat**

The Executive Secretariat will be a permanent full-time position funded in part by the three agencies providing leadership roles (ARS, Forest Service, and NRCS). While the position is housed in OCE, the incumbent will provide full-time support to the Hubs program and the National Leader. The incumbent is expected to have the skills needed to communicate effectively with agency and department personnel and to track the logistics of the hub effort. The position will be a GS-11.12.13.

**I. Regional Leaders Forum**

The Regional Leaders Forum will consist of the Leaders of the Regional Hubs and Subsidiary Hubs, plus the National Leader of the Regional Hubs (*ex officio*).

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

- Support the development and implementation of a national strategic plan for the Hubs.
- Share individual Hubs' work plans and ensure that the Hubs collaborate and coordinate activities to ensure that the strategic goals are achieved and network opportunities are realized.
- Develop an outreach process for engaging potential partners in Hubs' activities.
- Ensure coordination with other agencies' regional entities.
- Develop a process for generating stakeholder input into Hub work plans.
- Provide regional and sector contributions to national climate change risk and vulnerability assessments.
- Direct and coordinate an annual workshop to share research progress, technology transfer progress, identify and address methodological and operational issues, and share extension and communication effectiveness and associated best practices.

**Subsidiary Hubs (Sub-Hubs)**

The roles and responsibilities of the Subsidiary Hubs are similar but narrower than those of a regional hub, with the scope defined by the Sub-Hub focus. Subsidiary Hubs will contribute to regional risk and vulnerability assessments, manage stakeholder processes for their areas of responsibility, and prepare sections and components of regional documents and reports including

assessments and plans. The Sub-Hubs will work closely with the Regional Hubs to coordinate information and product delivery across the region and sectors.

**Regional Committees**
It is envisioned that each region and subsidiary will establish committees and processes to help achieve the goals of the hub which may include:

**Steering Committee**–The steering committee helps the leader, Sub-hub leaders and cooperators coordinate the Regional Hub activities by providing the Regional leadership with information and perspectives from all contributing USDA agencies and other appropriate Federal research providers (e.g., DOI Climate Science Centers and NOAA Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISAs)). The Subsidiary Hubs will also have steering committees.

**Stakeholder Input**–The Regional Hub will solicit input from stakeholder on needs, important issues, and feedback on Hub products through a variety of mechanisms including coordination with existing regional stakeholder committees, such as those associated with RISAs, Climate Science Centers, and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

***Committee Sponsors***
The Committee is sponsored by Chiefs/Administrators/Directors of each Agency represented on the Committee (see Appendix A).

***Committee Charter Approved by:***

Chief
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Date 1/31/14

Administrator
Agricultural Research Service

Date 1/31/14

FOR Chief
Forest Service

Date 2.3.14

Sonny Ramaswamy
Administrator
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

01/31/2014
Date

Juan M. Garcia
Administrator
Farm Service Agency

2/3/2014
Date

Brandon Willis
Administrator
Risk Management Agency

1/31/2014
Date

Deputy Under Secretary
Rural Development

31 Jan 2014
Date

Chief Economist

31 JAN 2014
Date

**Appendix A–Committee Members**
The Committee shall be composed of a total of nine members including the National Leader and one senior executive from each the following eight USDA agencies:

- Agricultural Research Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Forest Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Risk Management Agency
- Rural Development
- Climate Change Program Office

**Appendix B–Committee Operating Guidelines**

The following guidelines will govern the functioning of the Committee:

- **Meeting Schedule:** The Committee will meet at least twice annually.
- **Meeting Agenda:** An agenda will be developed by the Chair and sent to the members before each meeting. The Chair will solicit agenda items at least four weeks prior to each meeting. A quorum of members (at least four) must be present in order to conduct business.

**Committee Business**

- **Meeting Management**: The Chair will conduct all meetings. The Vice-Chair will serve in this capacity in the absence of the Chair.
- **Meeting Notes**: Notes will be provided to the members within one week following each meeting.
- **Communication with Agencies and Stakeholders**: At the conclusion of each meeting the Committee will develop a "committee communique" that members will use to communicate the Committee's activities and recommendations to their respective agencies and stakeholders. Members will also report to the Committee on feedback received from their agencies and stakeholders.

**Appendix C–Regional and Subsidiary Hubs and Lead Agencies**

Pacific Northwest–Forest Service
Southwest–ARS, Forest Service
    California–Specialty crops and forestry
Northern Plains–ARS
Southern Plains–ARS
Midwest-ARS
    Houghton, Michigan–Northern forestry
Northeast–Forest Service
Southeast–Forest Service
    Caribbean–Tropical forestry and agriculture